

II. INTRODUCTION

Overview

The three million acre Superior National Forest (SNF) is located in northeastern Minnesota's arrowhead region and has rich and varied resources (Figure I.1). The Forest provides pulpwood and sawtimber to the forest products industry. Visitors can enjoy year round recreation opportunities including travel in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW). In addition, many lakes and both cold and warm water streams provide abundant fish habitat within the SNF boundaries. Furthermore, the vast pine, fir, aspen, and spruce forest communities are home to numerous wildlife species including deer, moose, bald eagle, and black bear. Northern Minnesota is also home to Canada lynx and is one of the last strongholds of the gray wolf in the lower 48 States.

This is the fourth Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Report compiled under the 2004 Superior National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) that was approved on July 30, 2004 which stated that "at intervals established in the Forest Plan, implementation shall be evaluated on a sample basis to determine how well objectives have been met and how closely management standards and guidelines have been applied. Based on this evaluation, a Forest interdisciplinary team (FIDT) shall recommend to the Forest Supervisor such changes in management direction, revisions, or amendments to the Forest Plan as are deemed necessary."

This M&E Report summarizes the results of monitoring Forest Plan implementation (including the BWCAW) from October 2007 through September 30, 2008. This report did not document any significant adverse changes to SNF resources during FY 2008 and therefore no changes in the Forest Plan are recommended.

The 2008 M&E Report framework utilizes the Forest Plan Monitoring Chapter (Chapter 4) as its foundation. The Monitoring Chapter outlined the following four-step approach to conduct monitoring and disclose findings:

- Monitoring Chapter: Provides strategic monitoring direction.
- The Monitoring Guide: Provides prescriptive monitoring framework.
- The Annual Monitoring Schedule: Provides current year specific prescriptive direction.
- Monitoring & Evaluation: Provides previous years findings and identifies applicable management recommendations.

The Monitoring Chapter of the Forest Plan was approved as part of the Record of Decision (ROD) in July 2004. The 2008 Annual Monitoring Schedule was finalized jointly by the FIDT and District Rangers and their staff in June of 2008. This M&E Report constitutes step four listed above.

The M&E Report is prepared by the FIDT and incorporates information gathered from Forest Service specialists across the SNF, partners, other agencies, private citizens and

non-profit organizations. This report is intended to be comprehensive, displaying monitoring conducted, evaluation, management considerations and summary highlights.

The M&E process enables the Forest Service to assess its effectiveness in moving toward stated management goals and desired conditions. The 2004 Forest Plan may be amended or revised to adapt to new information and changed conditions identified through M&E efforts. Through this adaptive management approach, the Forest Plan is kept current.

Additional details on selected resources are found in the Appendices. An Executive Summary that describes the Program Overview, Evaluation, and Management Recommendation sections is also available.

Monitoring and Evaluation Report Objectives

The following is a list of the primary objectives of the M&E Report:

- Provide current progress in implementing Forest Plan direction, including reaching desired conditions and producing goods and services
- Validate effectiveness of specific management practices (including standards and guidelines).
- Identify and/or provide status of any Forest Plan amendments and needed changes in management practices.
- Document monitoring activities and findings anticipated useful in key/emerging issues.

Minimum Legally Required Monitoring

Minimum monitoring and evaluation requirements were identified in the Forest Plan Monitoring Chapter. Some requirements provide guidance for the development of a monitoring program, while others include specific compliance requirements. Chapter 4 in the 2004 Forest Plan has a more thorough discussion of the required monitoring items. Minimally legal required monitoring that was evaluated in the 2008 M&E Report and the pages they can be found on are shown in Table I.1. The remaining minimally legal required monitoring items will be evaluated during the fifth year (Fiscal Year (FY) 2009) M&E Report.

Monitoring Progress of Forest-wide Desired Conditions and Objectives

Forest desired conditions are broad statements describing conditions the SNF will strive to achieve. Achievement of desired conditions is not mandatory, there are no specific time frames for achieving them, and they are not amenable to direct measurement. In other words, desired conditions describe the ends desired rather than the means to achieve these ends.

Forest objectives are statements of measurable results intended to promote the achievement of Forest Plan goals. Objectives generally are achieved by implementing projects or activities. Objectives either have a stated timeframe for accomplishment, or they will be accomplished during the life of the Plan (10-15 years).

Monitoring and Evaluation Report Format

Section II of this report explains how monitoring activities and evaluation for each resource respond to the pertinent Forest Plan Monitoring Questions and corresponding Monitoring Drivers. Monitoring drivers are also shown at the beginning of each chapter. A Monitoring Driver is the Forest Plan Desired Condition, Objective, Standard or Guideline that identifies the reason why the SNF monitors a particular resource (See Forest Plan Chapter 4, p. 4-7). Chapters for each resource section are presented in the same order as portrayed in the Forest Plan. The following describes the sections:

- **Key Points.** This section provides a brief overview of program highlights and key monitoring and evaluation findings.
- **Monitoring Conducted.** This section displays (a) applicable monitoring activity, practice or effect measured; (b) monitoring methods; (c) when monitoring occurred; and (d) where monitoring occurred. Field monitoring results and findings are emphasized in this M&E Report. Project monitoring information is used to substantiate monitoring summaries and conclusions during the evaluation process.
- **Evaluation and Conclusions.** This section describes contributions towards Forest Plan objectives and desired conditions. Narrative, tables or graphs portray:
- Existing Conditions as of July 2004 when the ROD was signed for the Forest Plan,
- Forest Plan objectives for the first decade of the plan and/or FEIS Desired Conditions, and
- FY 2008 accomplishments. Accomplishments are further delineated by those actually performed during this reporting period and those planned in project decisions but not yet implemented. This is intended to give the reader insight into the direction a particular resource is headed.
- **Management Considerations.** Specific management considerations for ongoing or future projects are identified.

Appendices A-F summarize project monitoring, management considerations, summary conclusions, vegetation objectives achievement, Non-Native Invasive Species occurrence, achievement of sensitive plant species objectives, and Regional Forester Sensitive Species.

Table I.1 Minimally legal monitoring requirements addressed in the 2008 Monitoring and Evaluation Report for the Superior National Forest.

Monitoring Requirement	M&E Report Section
Lands are adequately restocked (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(i))	Timber
Maximum opening from even even-aged management (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(iii))	Timber
Control of destructive insects and disease (36 CFR 219.12(k)5(iv))	Insects & Disease
Population Trends of the seven Management Indicator Species in relation to habitat changes (36 CFR 219.19(a)(6))	Wildlife MIS-Aquatic Wildlife MIS-Terrestrial
Effects of off off-road vehicles (36 CFR 219.21)	Recreation
Comparison of projected and actual outputs and services (36 CFR 219.12(k)(1))	Socio-Economic
Comparison of actual and estimated costs (36 CFR 219.12(k)(3))	Socio-Economic

Figure I.1. Location of the Superior National Forest in Minnesota.

